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Argentina: Resolving the past can bring solutions for the present

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The decision by the executive to open the military archives from the years of military government in Argentina should receive a positive and immediate response from the armed forces in order to fully clarify what happened during the country's darkest years, said Virginia Shoppee, Amnesty International's researcher on Argentina.

By having full access to the documentation contained in the armed forces archives, as decreed by the Defence Minister, the courts will have the opportunity to make progress in the investigations they have initiated, making it easier for them to find out what happened to the disappeared and ensuring that truth and justice are attained.

This measure, which victims' relatives and human rights organizations have been demanding for three decades, is vital if the armed forces and the courts are to respond to the demands of the Argentinian people. It is also important to ensure that all necessary measures are taken to protect the documentation contained in the archives.

"The Argentinian Government has taken a key step in the search for truth and justice as regards past crimes," said Virginia Shoppee.

"However, a country that is truly committed to respecting human rights should also look to the present and take decisive action to protect all human rights, civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural. Human rights are indivisible and it is not possible to choose to protect just some of them, they are all crucial for human dignity and development. It is essential to establish the social and economic conditions, as well as the necessary legal guarantees, so that everyone can enjoy those rights and fundamental freedoms in practice," said Virginia Shoppee.

General information

On 22 March 2006, two days before the thirtieth anniversary of the coup, the Defence Minister, Nilda Garré, instructed the Secretariat for Military Affairs, by means of decree 825/05, to guarantee unrestricted access to any Armed Forces documentation or databases that may be of interest to investigations into the mass human rights violations committed under the military government (1976-1983).

The order extends to the archives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, the General Chiefs of Staff of the Army, Navy and Air Force, the Armed Forces Supreme Court and "any department or division" of the Defence Ministry. The documentation will be made available to the National Memory Archive.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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